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Le film de Souleymane Cissé



LE VENT

FINYÈ

Abstracts

SHORT HISTORY OF BLACK AFRICAN CINEMA. WHEN CINEMA WAS "AFRICAN" BUT IN NAME ONLY

Alessandra Speciale

Despite the fact that the first projectors came to the shores of the French African colonies in 1905, genuine African cinema did not see the light until 1955. During the colonial period pictures were called African if they were filmed in Africa or had African story lines. Not until Independence were Africans actually making African cinema. Up until that time there were African-based pictures that focused on the continent's exoticism, plus educational films, ethnological documentaries and films made by missionaries. There were also a few films made by Europeans such as Jean Rouch, who sincerely tried to tear down cultural barriers and bring the African world in direct contact with filmgoers. At the time of Independence there were a significant number of filmmakers who had been trained in European schools. France, from the onset (and to the present day) was more involved in supporting African cinema than Great Britain. However, this also implied greater control. Collaboration of this type of is still questioned today, but the vast majority of African films have been partially financed by French institutions. Starting in the Seventies, almost all films spoke of issues concerning the process of emancipation. This type of cinema was based on political commitment and an effort to turn cinema into a tool for changing society.

THE LAW OF STINGINESS. ECONOMIC PANORAMA OF AFRICAN CINEMA

Clément Tapsoba

African filmmakers undergo great hardships in financing their work. They have to rely on their cunning and a thousand and one tricks of the trade. Sometimes, over ten years go by between the inception of a project to its finish. Because of the lack of any domestic policies subsidising film production, African filmmakers have to struggle with the French Ministry of Co-operation (if the filmmaker is French-speaking), and with the European Union, making their way through all kinds of foundations and institutions dedicated to supporting African cinema. All of this makes African cinema a highly dependent product. On the other hand, African filmmakers are aware of the fact that the viability of filmmaking depends on the viability of other industries fundamental to cinema, such as the cinema screening room business, films importation and distribution, technical infrastructure and professional training.

CURRENT TRENDS IN AFRICAN CINEMA

Clément Tapsoba

Tunisian critic and filmmaker Férid Boughedir divides African cinema into five tendencies. The first is political cinema, which analyses the society according to political, social and economic criteria. The second is moralistic cinema, which seeks the transformation of humankind by means of moral concepts and often times through throwing positive light on tradition and village life. The third is the "egoistic" tendency, characterised by personal issues which concern the director but do not particularly interest the public at large. The fourth is commercial cinema. The fifth is filmmaking which emphasises form and aesthetic values. The solution for African cinema is to be found in the melange of different trends, in the search for original subject matter and an honest attempt at bringing both African and Western audiences closer together.

EVOLUTION OF TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN AFRICAN CINEMA

N. Frank Ukadike

The debate on tradition and modernity in African cannot be approached by seeing African traditional culture as an eternal unchangeable entity or by associating the concept of modernity with the West. In the same way, African culture cannot be understood from an purely Western perspective. For example, magic and witchcraft, which were ridiculed in colonial films, are understood by African filmmakers to be a part of the popular culture, essential for understanding personality, nationality and identity.

REFLECTIONS ON AFRICAN CINEMA IN THE NINETIES

Mbye Cham

The different changeovers to private enterprise and budget cuts have had negative effects on African cinema. Some filmmakers are reacting against this situation. Actions by the Western African Union of Creators and Entrepreneurs (UCECAO), following up on an initiative by Soulemayne Cissé, and the Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI), are helping to move cinematography forward. Political stability in some of the South African countries and the creation of new film and video screening rooms are also positive moves. Co-productions with other countries on the continent are becoming more commonplace giving rise to a greater number of pictures and better conditions. Another matter being debated currently is the interest in universalising the subject matter of films, as well whether or not it is advisable to make films in English in order to encourage global distribution. The combination of subjects and the disparity in criteria seen in the 90s in terms of African cinema could lead to a future with more varied and productive roads to follow.

IDRISSA OUÉDRAOGO, THE PROTAGONIST OF THE NINETIES

Tahar Chikhaoui

Idrissa Ouédraogo is, without question, one of the most important African filmmakers today. His films, which display his involvement in African reality, have managed to avoid going over subjects that were dealt with over and over again in the Seventies from a militant and simplified outlook. Concerned with cinematographic language, staging, framing and drama based on the ambiguity of characters, his films have transcended the African character, becoming a part of world production. For this reason his films cause a paradoxical impression; they follow the African reality very closely and very objectively, while at the same time expressing profoundly human values and universal ideas. Through his films we perceive Africans in their human dimension, with their defects and qualities, in their smallness and their grandeur. In spite of the hardships, as Ouédraogo says, African filmmaking must exist. The work of this filmmaker is one of the best ways to guarantee that the images and sounds of African will continue being enjoyed on the screen.

CHEICK OUMAR SISSOKO, POLITICAL CINEMA

Clément Tapsoba

Cheick Oumar Sissoko studied filmmaking at the Louis Lumière School, in addition to History and Sociology. He has always been concerned with analysing the political and social situation of the African community. Coherent with

his intention of helping to create African cinema, Sissoko reduces his production structures to a minimum in order to adapt them to what exists in his native country, and tries to use African experts in his teams production teams.

OUSMANE SEMBÈNE, THE CLASSIC OF CLASSICS

Françoise Pfaff

Ousmane Sembène, writer and filmmaker, is in addition a political activist. His films side with the underprivileged, as well as analyse and denounce the negative influence of neo-colonialism on the development of African nations. Trained in the school of life (he has been a mechanic, a carpenter and a stonemason, among other trades), he has gone through different ideological stages, from a fascination for Islam, followed by involvement in nationalist movements and Marxist militancy. He has also taken part in important strikes and trade union activities and political movements. At the end of the Fifties, he travelled to the USSR, China and North Vietnam to meet artists, writers and political leaders. In 1961 he decided to become a filmmaker in order to pass on contradictions and complexity of Africa to his own countrymen and to the entire world. In addition to his substantial fiction and documentary films, he has made a point of using African languages in his work, and in 1970 in Dakar he started up a newspaper in Wolof. Considered by many as the last intellectual African peasant and trade union leader, he has always renounced commercial cinema and has remained true to his commitment to using cinema as a weapon for combat.

SOULEYMANE CISSÉ, THE MAGIC OF REALITY

Giuseppe Gariazzo

Souleymane Cissé is the African representative of a type of poetic cinema that experiments with intensively sensual imagines. Based on simple elements of nature, complex discourses developed on human beings, their origins and the passing of time. His filmmaking uses fantastic elements to

construct the poetry of reality. Time, space, light and movement are some of the elements he uses to build his images and sounds. Political and social issues, more expressly presented in his first works, have become less and less direct yet more elaborated.

DJIBRIL DIOP MAMBÉTY, AFRICA REINVENTED

Alessandra Speciale

Mambéty is one of the few African directors who did not study in Europe and who began to film images with no previous cinematographic training whatsoever, inspired by his native Dakar. His are the most complex ideas ever to be produced in African cinema. His Africa is like none other. All of his films are impregnated with dreamlike fantasy and symbolism and by painful conscience. His rebellious images take on the revolutionary tendency of protest cinema characterised throughout the world in films made in the Sixties and Seventies. Mambéty conveys the idea that there are no longer any "group" certainties and that in Africa, as in the rest of the world, the only road to salvation for the individual is for the social man to reconcile with the spiritual man.

HAILÈ GERIMA, THE MEMORY OF SLAVERY

Tama Hamilton-Wray

Gerima is a follower of Franz Fanon, who highlighted the importance of national culture in the decolonization process, as well as the Third Cinema movement, identifying filmmaking as a weapon that should be used by the masses to fight against imperialism. He studied in the United States, where he later worked as a professor. His fiction films and documentaries speak to the problems of the black community. He deals with the history of arrested activists, the political awakening of ordinary black people in the United States and of the history of slavery in the US. This pan-African filmmaker speaks out for cultural inheritance on the part of African people and underlines the issues of resistance, the capacity of recovery, the assumption of power by blacks and the transformation of society.